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Statewide Birth Outcomes Initiative Conference Being Held in Columbia on November 14
South Carolina shows improvement in 2013 March of Dimes Premature Birth Report Card.

Columbia, SC - In support of our efforts to prevent premature births, the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS) and the South Carolina Hospital Association (SCHA) are hosting the second annual South Carolina Birth Outcomes Initiative (BOI) Symposium on Thursday, November 14 from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. at SCHA in Columbia.

Featuring the theme, “Supporting Pathways to Healthier Moms and Babies,” keynote speakers Dr. Michael Lu, Associate Administrator of Maternal and Child Health for the US Department of Health and Human Services; Dr. Scott Berns, Senior Vice President and Deputy Medical Officer for the March of Dimes National Office; and Dr. Kathryn Menard, Vice Chair for Obstetrics and Director of Maternal-Fetal Medicine for the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill will address attendees and lead discussions on infant mortality and prematurity prevention.

“We are excited to host this conference featuring leading national experts presenting cutting edge information and sharing innovative strategies to continue our mission of improving the health of our babies and moms,” said Tony Keck, Director of SCDHHS. “This is an opportunity to highlight and educate others on our statewide birth outcomes initiative to improve the health of babies and moms in South Carolina.”

The goal of this symposium is to highlight current areas of quality improvement and to raise awareness of evidence-based, best practices in perinatal health care in South Carolina. This event will also highlight successes for mothers and babies during the first two years of SC Birth Outcomes Initiative and outline further strategies to improve birth outcomes in 2014. The conference will feature keynote speakers in the morning and workshop sessions on several BOI efforts including encouraging breastfeeding and Baby Friendly Hospitals, behavior health risk screening and a model of group prenatal care that has shown a decrease in preterm birth rates.

With the mindset that infant mortality and low birth weight babies are two of the state’s most pressing health problems, SCDHHS, SCHA and the South Carolina Chapter of the March of Dimes joined with other community partners to create the now nationally recognized South Carolina BOI. Since its inception in 2011, BOI has expanded efforts to reduce the number of low birth weight babies and ensure the healthiest possible start in life for all infants.

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Premature birth is a leading cause of death for newborns. And, for those babies who survive, it's also a leading contributor to long term health issues. According to the national Kids Count data center, South Carolina ranked 42nd in the United States for infant mortality and 47th in low birth weight babies. In the 2013 March of Dimes Premature Birth Report Card that measures each state's progress in reducing preterm births, South Carolina received a grade of "D" based on its rate of premature births. Despite this low score, South Carolina was the only state nationally with a "D" rating and one of only two southeastern states on the report card that achieved improvements over 2012 in all three March of Dimes selected contributing factors – percentage of uninsured women, late preterm births and women who smoke.

"As part of the March of Dimes Prematurity Campaign, we are working toward stronger, healthier babies in our state by eliminating elective inductions prior to 39 weeks. The collaborative effort of the BOI has helped make this possible," said Mona Carter, State Director of the March of Dimes South Carolina Chapter. "Since August 2011, there has been a 51% reduction in the number of elective inductions prior to 39 weeks."

"We still have a long way to go to realize our goal in reducing the rate of premature birth in our state," said Keck. "However, these improvements show BOI is already producing significant results which should positively impact our future grades on this annual report card."

The three main objectives of South Carolina's BOI are to reduce the number of low birth weight babies, to decrease the total number of days South Carolina babies spend in neonatal intensive care units and to improve the racial disparities in birth outcomes in our state.

"I have been so impressed with the progress being made in South Carolina as a direct result of the Birth Outcomes Initiative. This is a group of people who are truly making a difference in the health of women and babies in our state," said Dr. Amy Picklesimer, an obstetrician with the Greenville Health System and the Clinical Lead of the Birth Outcomes Initiative. "The reason that SC BOI has become a national model is that it has been so effective in moving the needle on long-standing public health challenges. I am looking forward to sharing some of our successes at the symposium in November."

For more information on South Carolina's Birth Outcomes Initiative or the upcoming symposium, visit www.scdhhs.gov/organizations/boi.

About the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services provides health care benefits to more than one million South Carolinians. Its mission is to purchase the most health for our citizens in need at the least possible cost to the taxpayer.

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